

A N
A D D R E S S
TO THE
D I S S E N T E R S
O N
C L A S S I C A L L I T E R A T U R E.

BY E. COGAN.

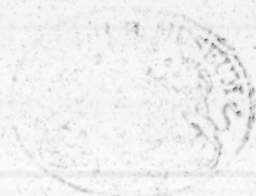
—K

VOS EXEMPLARIA GRÆCA
NOCTURNA VERSATE MANU, VERSATE DIURNA.

Πάντοτε τὰς ἐπιδόσεις ὁρῶμεν γιγνομένας, καὶ τῶν τεχνῶν, καὶ τῶν
ἄλλων ἀπάντων, ἔτι διὰ τῆς ἐμμενουσας τοῖς καθέτωσιν, ἀλλὰ
διὰ τῆς ἐπανορθουσας, καὶ τολμῶντας αἰεὶ τι κινεῖν τῶν μὴ
καλῶς ἐχούτων.

Ex Isocrate, paululum mutatum.

CIRENCESTER: PRINTED BY S. RUDDER.
AND SOLD BY S. CROWDER, PATER-NOSTER-ROW, LONDON.
M DCC LXXXIX.
PRICE ONE SHILLING.



A N
A D D R E S S
T O T H E
D I S S E N T E R S.

MY FRIENDS AND BRETHREN,

WHen an individual presumes to obtrude advice on a large Society, he must trust either to the force of his eloquence, the influence of his character, or the goodness of his cause. It is in the latter alone that I now confide, while I address a few words to you on the subject of Classical Learning. My only motive being an earnest desire to see you, as a body, wise, learned, and respectable, I hope that the sincerity of my intention will secure me a patient and candid hearing.

As I am well aware that the advice which I am going to offer will not be delivered with an energy adequate to its importance, and, therefore, that it will need every advantage which it can derive from an awakened attention in the reader, I beg a moment's indulgence while I first refresh his memory with a

B

few

few remarks on the general uses of Classical information.

The value of Classical science is very generally admitted. Even were it not important for its own sake, it would deserve attention on account of the esteem in which it is held by the world, and the place which it assumes in the writings and conversation of the learned. It would be worth the study of the gentleman, did he pursue it with no other view than to save him the empty stare of admiration, and the awkward blush of ignorance. But I will suppose him to be situated where his deficiency shall not be discovered, where his ears shall never be saluted with a classical quotation, and where he shall never be called upon to develop the mystery of a Latin phrase. Still, if he have any taste for mental entertainment, the want of Classical literature must be deeply felt. It can be no pleasant thing to be checked in almost every page of an interesting volume, by scrawls which convey no information to the brain. But such interruptions he must frequently experience, who reads an English author without a knowledge of the Greek and Roman languages.

But

But Classical learning does not owe its importance solely, nor even principally, to the frequency of its application ; it boasts of un-derived, essential value. If it be worth while to peruse the most masterly specimens of fine writing which the world has yet beheld ; if Historians, Critics, Orators, and Poets, whose names stand unrivalled in the rolls of fame, will justify and reward our attention, the ancient languages have by no means lost their claim to our assiduous study. ^(a)

Some indeed pretend that we have equalled, and even excelled the Greeks and Romans in the several departments of elegant literature. This Enquiry I shall not now discuss. I have given my suffrage in favour of the ancients, and shall add no more ; except

^(a) Let no one marvel that I have excluded the Philosophers from this list of unrivalled authors. In philosophical investigations the Moderns possess a decided superiority. Were we to investigate the causes of this phenomenon, Christianity would, I think, acquire its share of praise. The gospel has afforded us no advantage for the composition of a poem, or the structure of a history, but on moral subjects it has shed the happiest illumination.

The immortal Shakespear forbids me to enrol the ancient Tragedy amongst those efforts of genius which have left the labours of posterity at a distance. Yet so sweetly does the Tragic muse of Greece complain, that a feeling heart will derive sufficient entertainment from Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, abundantly to compensate the labour of learning their language.

few remarks on the general uses of Classical information.

The value of Classical science is very generally admitted. Even were it not important for its own sake, it would deserve attention on account of the esteem in which it is held by the world, and the place which it assumes in the writings and conversation of the learned. It would be worth the study of the gentleman, did he pursue it with no other view than to save him the empty stare of admiration, and the awkward blush of ignorance. But I will suppose him to be situated where his deficiency shall not be discovered, where his ears shall never be saluted with a classical quotation, and where he shall never be called upon to develop the mystery of a Latin phrase. Still, if he have any taste for mental entertainment, the want of Classical literature must be deeply felt. It can be no pleasant thing to be checked in almost every page of an interesting volume, by scrawls which convey no information to the brain. But such interruptions he must frequently experience, who reads an English author without a knowledge of the Greek and Roman languages.

But

But Classical learning does not owe its importance solely, nor even principally, to the frequency of its application ; it boasts of underrived, essential value. If it be worth while to peruse the most masterly specimens of fine writing which the world has yet beheld ; if Historians, Critics, Orators, and Poets, whose names stand unrivalled in the rolls of fame, will justify and reward our attention, the ancient languages have by no means lost their claim to our assiduous study. ^(a)

Some indeed pretend that we have equalled, and even excelled the Greeks and Romans in the several departments of elegant literature. This Enquiry I shall not now discuss. I have given my suffrage in favour of the ancients, and shall add no more ; except

^(a) Let no one marvel that I have excluded the Philosophers from this list of unrivalled authors. In philosophical investigations the Moderns possess a decided superiority. Were we to investigate the causes of this phenomenon, Christianity would, I think, acquire its share of praise. The gospel has afforded us no advantage for the composition of a poem, or the structure of a history, but on moral subjects it has shed the happiest illumination.

The immortal Shakespear forbids me to enrol the ancient Tragedy amongst those efforts of genius which have left the labours of posterity at a distance. Yet so sweetly does the Tragic muse of Greece complain, that a feeling heart will derive sufficient entertainment from Æschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, abundantly to compensate the labour of learning their language.

it be to subscribe the sentiment of Dr. Blair, that "Orators, such as Cicero and Demosthenes, we have none".^(b) Several political causes might be mentioned to which this disparity may be attributed; but such discussions do not fall within the limits of my present purpose. However, allowing the fact, the following inference may be worthy of observation; that the ancient languages deserve the study of all who intend to pursue any line of public speaking.

But to say no more of the Greek and Roman authors, it may be observed, that the languages in which they wrote are, in themselves, deserving of our attention. "Greek, says the ingenious Mr. Gregory, is worth the pains of learning merely as a language, and I question whether any man can be an adequate judge of the structure, force, and harmony of language who is totally ignorant of it". Indeed it seems to possess every excellence with which language can be embellished. It is majestic, copious, and smooth.

^(b) I feel myself strongly inclined to swell this little catalogue with the name of Lyfias. Cicero and Quintilian speak highly in his praise. Nor do I know why he should have been neglected by the Moderns, except it be that his works are come down to us in a very mutilated state. However, several of his Orations may be read with ease, pleasure, and advantage.

It

It adapts itself to every subject in the wide circle of science with a versatility which at once astonishes and delights ; and shews itself to be equally calculated for perspicuity and ornament. So numerous and exquisite are its beauties, that let a man but make it his study 'till he can read it with precision and ease, and I will venture to assure him, that he will have provided himself with a never-failing source of elegant amusement. (°)

(°) This, perhaps, may be a proper place to introduce a remark on the mode of teaching this incomparable language. Before any thing can be done to purpose, translations must be abolished. It is owing to the custom of reading Greek through the medium of a Latin version, that many who are called Scholars, while they manifest an extensive acquaintance with the Grecian authors, betray a scandalous ignorance of their language. This charge might be substantiated by the example of characters whom the world has little suspected of literary inability. But the dead shall sleep in peace.

It is generally supposed that the Greek is so difficult a language, that to gain a facility in reading it, will require a degree of labour and attention which the advantage will never repay. But let translations be dismissed, and let tutors possess a competence of skill, and the difficulty will vanish. The language, it is true, is very copious, nor is it easy to comprehend the exact force of its particles. To enter into it minutely, may require considerable powers of discrimination, and for the perception of its beauty, some natural sensibility will be useful. But it distinguishes with accuracy, and therefore is capable of being understood with precision.

But

But all the advantages which result from classical studies have not yet been enumerated.

While the young scholar is, in the opinion of the undiscerning world, employed in the mere pursuit of words, he is, in fact, imbibing copious information on the important subjects of Grammar, History, and Criticism. It may be further remarked that classical pursuits afford a valuable exercise to the memory, assist the faculty of discrimination, cherish the seeds of taste, and awaken the desire of science.

Here it must not be omitted, that Classical Studies greatly assist the young composer in the formation of his style. It is not, indeed, a fact, that all good classical scholars write their native language with purity, and elegance ; but it may safely be affirmed that very few attain distinguished skill in composition, who have not carefully perused the Greek and Roman authors. For this appearance in the world of letters several reasons may be assigned. One we find in the affinity which subsists between the ancient and modern languages. This relation is so close and implicated, that I question whether the full force of the English tongue, for instance, can be felt by any one to whom, at least the
Latin

Latin language is not tolerably familiar. Another cause of the phenomenon before us is undoubtedly this, that Greece and Rome have furnished the most masterly, and the chastest specimens of studied composition. A third reason for the advantage which classical pursuits afford to the writer, is of an abstruser kind. It lies involved in the principles of universal Grammar. It is scarcely to be expected that he should enter with feeling, or discernment, into the various inflections of language, who has no acquaintance with the Theory of Grammar, and who has not seen it illustrated beyond the narrow limits of his native tongue.

However, in the fate of these observations I feel myself but little interested, as I am convinced that no one will presume to controvert the following remark; that whatever may be the importance of classic literature to others, there is one order of men to whom it is indispensable; I mean, the ministers of the gospel. They whose business it is not only to enforce the duties of Christianity, but to explain its doctrines; they to whom the Christian world will look for a defence of their religion, should its authority be impugned, or its principles controverted by the infidel,
can,

can, surely, never be too well acquainted with the treasures of ancient learning.

It is vulgarly apprehended that to be able to read the Greek testament with facility, is classical furniture enough for a christian teacher. But if his knowledge of Greek literature is confined to the sacred volume, he remains in much the same situation with the English reader. He is as liable as the latter to be imposed upon by false criticism, and unclassical translations. This information may be new to some, and may appear strange to others; but it is abundantly corroborated by living proofs.

But let it be allowed, for a moment, that the Greek testament may be sufficiently understood without any further supplies of ancient learning than what itself affords. There are still many volumes which may occasionally challenge the attention of the divine, which cannot be read to advantage without a critical knowledge of the Greek and Roman languages. The present state of Theological controversy abundantly illustrates this assertion.

But, my Friends, you are now exclaiming, why is this harangue on Classical Literature addressed to Us? Have We stood forth as the
abettors

abettors of ignorance? Have We treated learning with contempt or disrespect? No. The Dissenting interest has supported names which are an honour to the list of English Critics and Divines. But truth obliges me to declare, that Classical Science by no means flourishes amongst us as a body. Documents of this fact I could adduce, till you would be weary of hearing them. But I will rest my appeal with those Gentlemen who have been employed to fill the classical department in the superintendence of Dissenting Academies. They can tell you what furniture our youth too often bring with them from the various schools in which they receive their Grammar learning. They can also inform you that the Academy is not the place for supplying the lamentable deficiency.

Some of you, perhaps, may hear my report with incredulity, and others listen to it with amazement. But as the fact is indisputable, so is its solution easy. We have amongst us no Public Seminaries for Classical Education. What, think you, supports the literature of Oxford and Cambridge? Not the magnificence of Libraries, nor the skill of Professors, but the Schools of Eton and Westminster. Let a lad go to either of

C

the

the Universities uninstructed in the elements of Classical science, and, I apprehend, no Tutor will even dream of sending him out into the world a finished scholar.

To enlarge on the general insufficiency of the Schools in which *our* youth receive their early education, might appear an invidious, and would be an unpleasant labour. I could observe, that when I was in a situation which obliged me to notice the qualifications which these seminaries afford, I have frequently wept within to see a lad of taste and genius ruined for ever, as a scholar, by the ignorance or inattention of his teacher. But let me dismiss the unwelcome subject.

I rejoice that when I address myself to Dissenters, I apply to men who have shewn themselves capable of vigorous exertion. The institutions which are now rising at Hackney and Manchester, are irrefragable evidences of your generous spirit, and promise distinguished utility. It pleased me to observe in the proposals of the Hackney College, that Classical learning is to occupy an important place in the system of education there adopted. But however able the direction of this seminary may be, I humbly apprehend, that the
cause

cause of Classcal literature will not derive from it any *essential* advantage. When young men enter a College, they find their attention attracted by pursuits which are far more alluring than conning a Grammar, and thumbing a Lexicon. They are encouraged to think on the most sublime and interesting subjects which human genius can investigate. Besides, every one who is acquainted with the arrangements of a College, cannot but know, that whatever be the inclination of the student, his time is too much occupied to allow of classcal proficiency, unless a good foundation have been previously laid.

What then, say you, can be done? I answer, Let Schools be raised as Nurseries for your Academies. Seek for able teachers, and if a sufficient number cannot be found among your own body, apply to the Clergy. It reflected no disgrace on the directors of Warrington Academy, to have procured the able assistance of Mr. Wakefield; nor will it be any discredit to the Dissenters at large, to invite learned Clergymen to superintend their Schools. A zeal for literature, and a desire to attain the best information, never yet founded to the disgrace either of an individual,

or a community. Perhaps some illiberal members of the establishment (for illiberal men are to be found in every denomination) might exclaim with triumph, upon the adoption of such a measure, So, you are obliged to apply to us for aid. But the answer is at hand. We never professed to enjoy equal advantages with yourselves. We have not possessed for ages Schools and Universities supported by the united influence of wealth and public authority.

It is, I doubt not, the object of your ambition that your sons should make a respectable figure in the Senate, in the Pulpit, and at the Bar. Let, then, the rudiments of their education be the object of your care. Let Seminaries be erected where they may copiously imbibe the principles of just taste, and masterly composition, from the fountain of the Greek and Roman authors. (^d)

When you attend on religious instruction, you deem it eligible that the oracles of truth should be unfolded to you by men who have free admittance to the recesses of sacred learn-

(^d) Græcæ nimirum linguæ Latinæque sermonibus animus is suum penitus imbutum idcirco esse voluit, quod ii ornamenta propria et quasi legitima Oratoris potissimum suppeditant, et consuetudinem similiter Anglice dicendi sensim afferunt. Præf. ad Bellend. p. 11.

ing. Indeed, literary information is the only advantage which can give the Christian teacher a superiority to his auditors, and thus qualify him for his important office. The aids of inspiration have long since been withdrawn; and as for the endowments of genius, they are scattered among the sons of men with so little distinction, that the pulpit Orator may be no more the favorite of nature than the meanest of his hearers. Classical learning, and an honest heart, may constitute his only furniture. Let, then, Schools be instituted, where they who are designed for the sacred character may lay up such a store of Classical Science, as shall give respectability to their names, and value to their labours.

Perhaps some may be of opinion, that, except to the Christian minister, the acquisition of two dead languages is an idle and fruitless labour; and may parsimoniously condemn it as a loss of time. It is, perhaps, a tax on the present age, that before we can proceed to the attainment of sublimer science, and propose ourselves as candidates for literary reputation, we must spend years in learning the dialects of nations which exist no longer. However, as matters are circumstanced, it does not appear,

pear, that classical studies are a waste of time. In the best classical scholars we generally find the largest share of extensive knowledge, and valuable information. Nor would the solution of this phenomenon, perhaps, be difficult. But I took up my pen, not to philosophize, but to persuade.

To enforce the advice which I have now taken the liberty to give, I cannot refrain from adding a consideration which appears to me peculiarly important. It respects the education of your ministers. It ought, my Friends, to be your first wish, as Dissenters, to supply your teachers with a fund of classical information. They, you know, enjoy distinguished advantages for the impartial investigation of sacred subjects. They are chained by no laws, they are fettered by no creeds of human composition, but are at liberty to follow the ray of truth wherever it may guide. From men so circumstanced great good may be expected, provided they be furnished with adequate supplies of learning. Let Classical Literature be invited to preside in Dissenting Seminaries, and the cause of truth and virtue cannot but be a gainer.

I have insinuated that Dissenting Schools, *in general*, afford but a scanty provision of classical

classical literature; and on this ground I have urged the erection of Public Seminaries. But let it be allowed, for the sake of argument, that every Dissenting School in the kingdom is, at present, under the ablest superintendence. Such a concession does not materially affect my cause. Institutions which are not supported by public encouragement will necessarily be fluctuating in their nature, and unequal in their direction. By a fortunate coincidence of events, it might so happen, that each of our schools should, at a certain period, be supplied with the most skilful instructors. But who could give us security for the ability of future teachers? Let not, then, your literary dependance rest on obvious uncertainties, but let some permanent institutions give stability to your character, and confidence to your prospects.

But strongly as I am impressed with the importance of the Institutions in question, I could not have recommended them but with exquisite reluctance, did I apprehend that they would materially injure the interests of my brethren in the ministry; who, we all know, are frequently compelled, by the embarrassment of their circumstances, to assume the laborious employment of the school-master.

master. But the Seminaries for which I am contending, would by no means supersede the necessity of private schools. Such would still be needed for the education of all those young men, who are not destined to tread the more sacred walks of literature and science, or whose parents may not approve of larger Institutions. They would maintain a very important station in the general system of public utility; and many of them might appear even more respectable than at present, when they grasp at objects which are beyond their reach. Should any one still continue dissatisfied with my conduct, I can only address him in the words of Dr. Jebb, and say, that "it is not my nature to give way to expediency at the expence of right."

I have now, my friends, given you my sentiments with freedom and honesty. Perhaps some narrow spirits will not thank me for exposing the nakedness of the land. But tho' selfish policy may censure me for exhibiting the disease to public notice, and might prefer concealment to a cure, yet every enlarged and thoughtful mind will readily allow, that it is better to seek an early remedy than suffer the disorder to consume our
vitals.

vitals. Let, then, the generous spirit which is now exerting itself to promote the cause of Dissenting Literature, condescend to shed its salutary influence on the elements of education, and the labours of the school. Otherwise, it requires no penetration to discern, nor confidence to affirm, that Colleges will raise their towering heads, in vain.

Perhaps it might be expected that he, who presumes to recommend a novel institution, should take upon him the farther trouble of specifying the means by which it may be supported, and proposing the arrangements which would give effect and stability to the design. But this I leave to older and to wiser heads. A station which I lately occupied having qualified me to form a pretty accurate estimate of Dissenting Literature, I thought it my duty to lay the case before you, as a body. But having stated the fact, assigned the cause, and suggested the remedy, I resign what remains to abler direction.

It is a maxim, to which there are but few exceptions, that the less a writer says of himself, the better. However, when the know-

D

ledge

ledge of an author's character may be important to the efficacy of his work, a degree of egotism may be pardoned. I wish, then, to remove a conception which some of my readers may have formed of me, from the warmth with which I have spoken of Classical Learning. They may imagine me to be one of those enthusiasts, all whose ardour is occupied by one department of Science, and who can allow no merit to men whose pursuits and feelings do not coincide with theirs. Thus they will be led to conclude, that I have viewed the state of Dissenting Literature through a deceitful medium. But as such an idea of the writer would greatly weaken the force of his advice, allow me to say, that I value Classical Learning, principally, for its subserviency to universal Science. I am not one of those characters who, in the spirit of retrogradation, esteem every thing in proportion to its antiquity, but rejoice to think that the world acquires increasing wisdom with increasing years. Set Theology and Historical Knowledge out of the question, and I should be much inclined to say, that a serious perusal of Locke and Hartley on the human mind, would tend more to enlarge

the

the understanding, than an intimate acquaintance with all the Greek and Roman authors. But with these *temperate* views of the subject, I do not hesitate to repeat my original assertion, that Classica Learning flourishes but little among the Dissenters, as a body.

But though I am well convinced that the remarks which have now been made are just, in the main, and that the advice which has been given is seasonable and wholesome, I am not sanguine enough to imagine that the present address will be attended with any immediate and visible effect. I am far from expecting that this little pamphlet will, like a magic wand, raise stately edifices for the education of our youth, and supply them with able instructors. I do not flatter myself that my feeble voice will rouse the Dissenting interest into a literary ferment, and loosen every tongue to the general cry of A School! A School! All that I hope from my labour is, that it may excite the enquiry of thoughtful minds, and provoke the exertions of abler pens : and that it may thus, though remotely, tend to the establishment of institutions, which, I cannot but think, are greatly wanted. If it should have this happy
con-

consequence, I shall please myself with the reflection, that I have neither lived nor written in vain.

Dicta est a me causa, Judices, et perorata. Jam intelligitis, quantum judicium sustineatis, quanta res sit, commissa vobis.

CICERO.

20 JU 66

